

BELMONT MILL, LOWER outhouse

(Nevada Belmont Mill)

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

Approximately 7 miles south of U.S. Route 50 on USDA Forest

Service Road No. 623

Ely vicinity

White Pine County

Nevada

HAER NV-46-L

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

## WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

## HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

### BELMONT MILL, LOWER OUTHUSE

HAER No. NV-46-L

Location: Approximately 7 miles south of U.S. Route 50 on USDA Forest Service Road No. 623, Ely vicinity, White Pine County, Nevada.  
U.S. Geological Survey, Seligman Canyon, Nevada, 7.5 Quadrangle (1992), Township 16 North, Range 57 East, Section 1.  
UTM Zone 11, Easting 2060675.35, Northing 14266596.73 (southeast corner of building) (NAD 83).  
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Feature No. F7.

Significance: The Tonopah Belmont Development Company (TBDC) was one of the most important companies created during Nevada's early twentieth-century mining boom. As ore deposits in its central Nevada mines were depleted, the company sought new claims to resurrect its fortunes. In 1926 TBDC built the Belmont Mill near Hamilton to process lead and silver ore from its recently acquired claims in the White Pine mining district of eastern Nevada. The small pilot mill employed the most recent advances in table concentration and flotation mineral processing techniques, and the company erected numerous other buildings and structures to support the mining and milling work. The site was largely abandoned by TBDC after a few years, but later owners used the mill and associated structures for smaller operations. Today, although most of the equipment has been removed, the Belmont Mill site is one of the only intact early twentieth-century mill complexes in eastern Nevada. Importantly, many of the domestic buildings and structures remain to provide a glimpse of daily life there, including relatively ephemeral buildings like the lower outhouse. The mill complex is a tangible reminder of the decline and failure of a once-powerful company and, thereby, of the boom and bust cycle so common in the mining industry. The subsequent modification and reuse of the site for small-scale operations typifies the ceaseless hum of optimism that sustains the mining industry.

Description: The two-room, gable-roofed lower outhouse is located in the canyon bottom about 10' south of the workshop (NV-46-K) and 50' southwest of the boardinghouse (NV-46-I), at the base of the steep hill that rises immediately to the west. The outhouse has been tipped onto its east side; when standing, it measured about 9'-10" north to south and 4'-10" east to west.

The outhouse has no foundation and originally rested on two 6" x 6" timbers oriented east to west that were set directly on the ground over an open pit; these supported three floor joists that extended north to south. The wood-framed walls are finished with board and batten siding (12"-wide boards and 3-1/2"-wide battens); the boards and battens are butted to frieze boards on the long walls and rake boards on the gable ends. The roof comprises short rafters notched onto sill plates with 12"-wide board sheathing and asphalt

roll roofing finished with metal edges. The roof has no eaves other than those formed by the slightly projecting edges of the sheathing. The outhouse has a doorway in each gable end finished with simple board trim. Both doors are missing although hinges remain on the south doorjamb. The interior is divided into a larger north room and a smaller south room by a partition wall of 12" boards. The north room is further divided in half by a small partition of two boards; these boards, but no other elements of the building, are painted turquoise. A green plastic toilet paper holder is mounted to the north side of the main partition wall. No seats or benches remain but a low interior wall was constructed about 6" east of the west wall, creating a narrow opening along the length of that wall that led to the pit below; all seats would have faced east.

History: See the Narrative Overview in HAER No. NV-46 for a broad contextual history.

It is not clear if the lower outhouse dates to 1926, the original period of construction for the site, although style and materials of construction are compatible with that date. At that time, about forty men were employed at the property and their prospective new residence, the boardinghouse (NV-46-I), was reported to have "nine bedrooms, a kitchen, lobby, and bath room, and [was] comfortably equipped."<sup>1</sup> The bath room may literally have been a room for bathing while the outhouse served other necessary functions, or the latter may have been used to supplement an indoor toilet. One photograph from ca. 1940 shows a building on the east side of the road, opposite the assay office (NV-46-G), that is very similar in appearance to the lower outhouse (see Figure 4 in HAER No. NV-46). There are no traces of a building here presently, and this may be the lower outhouse in its original location (moving outhouses was a very common practice). Alternatively, the lower outhouse may have never been moved and the outhouse in the photograph may have been a second outhouse built to the same design by TBDC in 1926.

Several past and present Ely residents recall the period in the 1960s when Ermyl Dowd acted as the Belmont Mill caretaker. Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr., worked claims in the area between 1966 and 1969 with his father, and remembers that all six boardinghouse rooms were occupied by miners working area claims during the summer months, sometimes at double occupancy. At the time, the boardinghouse had running water and indoor toilets, but the boarders made use of the lower outhouse (in its present location) as well.<sup>2</sup> The plastic paper holder also indicates that the outhouse was used in more recent years.

Today the lower outhouse is in poor condition: it has been tipped onto its east side and the west wall has been largely destroyed by site visitors and/or weather, exposing the interior of the building to further weathering and deterioration. Both doors are missing, as are the original benches or seats in both rooms.

Sources: See HAER No. NV-46.

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<sup>1</sup> Ely Daily Times, June 3, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> Interviews with Hal Jensen and Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr., 1 October 2010.

Historian: Anne Oliver, Principal, Oliver Conservation Group. Fieldwork for the project was conducted in the fall of 2010. Project documentation was accepted by HABS/HAER in 2011.

Project Information: See HAER No. NV-46 for complete details. In summary, this project was completed under a contract between the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and a consulting team under the direction of ajc architects (Salt Lake City, Utah), in consultation with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office. The project historian was Anne Oliver, historic preservation consultant with Oliver Conservation Group. Matt Wallace, intern architect with ajc architects, was responsible for the architectural measured drawings and completed all fieldwork and final drawings with the assistance of Oliver Smith Callis, draftsman. The photography was produced by Steve Tregeagle Photography under the direction of Steve Tregeagle and with the assistance of Heath Brown.